GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3967
ANSWERED ON:21.04.2008
DECEITFUL CAMPAIGNS BY PRIVATE TELECOM COMPANIES
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether some private telephone companies are befooling the people through advertisement and marketing campaigns and the Government is not taking any action thereto:

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) the objectives for which Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has been constituted by the Government;

(d) the reasons for not taking action against these deceitful campaigns by this Authority;

(e) whether any action has been taken by the Government in this regard; and

(f) if so, the details thereof during the last three years and as on date?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA)

(a) (b), (d) to (f): Transparency in the provision of telecom services and marketing thereof by the companies has been an issue of high priority. A number of measures have been taken by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) since its inception to promote transparency in the offer of services in the interest of protecting consumers. These include the issue of Regulations, Directions, Orders and Advisories from time to time and this is an ongoing process.

Some of the important measures mandated by TRAI to improve consumer transparency include the following:

(i) With a view, to remove confusion in respect of tariff plans marketed as having `Lifetime Validity', TRAI issued regulatory guidelines vide Telecom Tariff Order 43rd Amendment notified on 21st March, 2006. Any tariff plan presented, marketed or offered as having lifetime or unlimited validity shall continue to be available to the subscriber as long as the service provider is permitted to provide such telecom service under the current license or renewed license.The service providers were told to inform the customers the current period of expiry of their license.

(ii) All publication/advertisements of tariffs shall be in a specified format and shall provide certain essential information vide Direction dated 2nd May, 2005.

(iii) The websites of the service providers and the tariff brochures available in the retail outlet shall contain complete details of the tariff plans vide Direction dated 2nd May, 2005.

(iv) No chargeable value added service shall be provided to a customer without his explicit consent vide Direction dated 3rd May, 2005 and 30th October, 2007.

(v) The pulse rate/tariff for premium rate service shall be published in all communications/advertisements vide Direction dated 3rd May, 2007.

(vi) Service providers shall inform customers in writing, within a week of activation of service, the complete details of his tariff plan. The changes in any item/aspect of tariff in the chosen package shall also be intimated to the customers, in writing vide Direction dated 29th June, 2005.

(vii) No tariff plan shall be offered, presented, marketed or advertised in a manner that is likely to mislead the subscribers vide Direction dated 16th September, 2005.

(viii) All monthly fixed recurring charges which are compulsory for a subscriber under any given plan shall be shown under one head vide Direction dated 16th September, 2005.

Compliance with the Regulations, Directions, Orders mandated by TRAI is closely monitored. TRAI has intervened in a large number

of cases of telecom service providers. The service providers have promptly responded to these interventions of TRAI and have made necessary amends. Overall, the action taken by TRAI from time to time has resulted in enhancing the transparency in the service provision by the telecom service providers. Recently (on 29th January, 2008) TRAI has mooted a consultation process on the subject of `Issues arising out of plethora of tariff offers in Access Service Provision`. This exercise is aimed to bring in further transparency.

(c) The objective of establishment of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India as envisaged in TRAI Act, 1997 is to regulate the telecommunication services, to protect the interest of service providers and consumers of the telecom sector, to promote and ensure orderly growth of the telecom sector and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The unprecedented growth witnessed in the telecom sector itself is evident of the fact that these objectives are uppermost in the action plan of TRAI.